

Admiral Gary Roughead
Chief of Naval Operations
Media Availability
Israel
June 23, 2008

CNO: General [Admiral] Marum – I met him for the first time in Newport but I think it's not insignificant that in the eight months that he and I have been CNOs we've met three times which is more than I've met any other of my counterparts.

As I've said, this is my first visit to Israel and the visit has been extremely enjoyable, worthwhile and I would say productive. It has been an opportunity for me to continue my dialogue with my counterpart, Admiral Marum. We both became chiefs of our navy at about the same time and this is my third opportunity to spend some substantive time with him in the last eight months that we've been leading our navies. So from a professional standpoint it's been extremely worthwhile. I've had the opportunity to visit the operational navy, to spend time at sea on a SAAR-5, to visit one of the Dolphin submarines and today to be again at sea on a patrol craft. That's what I love to do, especially because it puts me in contact with the young men and women who are your navy. As is the case in both of our navies, that is the navy: the young men and women who serve in it.

But there have also been opportunities to meet with the Chief of Defense and the Minister of Defense and the Director General as part of my program and then also to spend some time on a personal level to see the country, experience the country. My wife is accompanying me. I haven't seen much of her because she's been off doing cultural things, but also visiting a hospital and things like that which she likes to do.

For me it is an important visit because of the relationship between our nations, between our navies and the views that we have on maintaining the security and the safety of the world's oceans and the sea lanes that are important to the prosperity and security of our countries. So it's been a good couple of days. I have one more day left where I'll visit Jerusalem.

With that, I'll turn it over to you because it's your questions that I'd like to get answered.

Reporter: (Jerusalem Post Newspaper) You said that you've met with General Marum three times which is the most of any other counterpart in the world. Why?

CNO: I think some of it is a bit coincidental. At the International Seapower Symposium we both came into our offices shortly before that and then he traveled to the United States [to attend]. He and I talked and I wanted to get a better appreciation of the events in the Middle East, so there was no question that it was important for me to come to Israel to

get his perspective and to be able to see the environment here firsthand. That's why to me it's important. When you look at our Maritime Strategy that we issued in October of last year, the week after I came into my position, we highlight a couple of things in that strategy...the capabilities that we as a Navy and more than just Navy -- a Navy, Marine Corps and Coast Guard -- that we believe are important to our future and that is remaining a global Navy, being a deterrent force, being able to exercise sea control whenever and wherever we must exercise it, being able to project power, whether it's from our aircraft carriers, our ships or our Marines coming off of our ships. [We are focused] in the area of maritime security, to ensure the flow of resources and commerce on the world's oceans, and also humanitarian assistance/disaster relief. Those are all things that we've highlighted. The other thing that comes out in our strategy and we're very specific about it, is that we are focusing in our Navy on two primary geographic areas: one is the Western Pacific and the other is the Arabian Gulf. It's because it's in those two areas that we derive our prosperity and consequently our security. So the Middle East figures very heavily into our strategy and it's an area that for all of my life has been of great interest.

Reporter: (Channel 1 News) Are you worried about the presence of the Russian Navy here?

CNO: No, no. The Russian navy recently deployed to the Mediterranean. It was the first such deployment in about 12 years. I have seen the Russian navy begin to redevelop its capabilities, but I'm not concerned about its operations in the Mediterranean or in any of the other oceans.

Reporter: How do you understand the new deployment? Twelve years?

CNO: Well, I think what has happened is that as a result of resources and some of the money that has flown from those resources that Russia is investing in its military capabilities and it's investing in its navy. We're beginning to see the Russian navy once again beginning to operate. As I've mentioned in our maritime strategy, we seek to engage in cooperative activities with navies around the world and I would like to be able to engage in those types of activities with the Russian navy. If some of that's in the Mediterranean that's great, if it's in the Pacific that's good, if it's in the Atlantic, that's good. But I'm not concerned about it.

Question: There are two potential meeting points between your forces and the Israeli forces: one is in the Gulf in the case of possible Israeli action. If we have to fly in airspace where your ships are, where your airplanes are too. And the other thing is the idea of positioning in early warning in AEGIS ships in the Mediterranean off shore, in order to defend Israel. Do you discuss this matter with your counterparts? And can you tell us something about that?

CNO: I think it's clear that our position has been in the case of Iran that we believe that we must pursue diplomatic solutions to the situation that exists there and the Navy that the United States operates in the Gulf is a very ready Navy.

Reporter: It's gun boat diplomacy?

CNO: I wouldn't refer to it as gun boat diplomacy. It's the way that global navies operate. I have ships in the Arabian Gulf, I have ships in the Indian Ocean, I have ships in the Pacific, and I have a hospital ship that's leaving Vietnam. We have ships that as you may know, were waiting to take relief into Burma. This is what a global Navy does. We have been in the Arabian Gulf for over 60 years, we intend to remain in the Arabian Gulf and because of the importance of that body of water and the critical Straits and the resources that flow in and out of the Gulf. We seek to work cooperatively with the other countries that are there.

For example Bahrain, for the first time, has taken command of a coalition task force. That's the first time in history that an Arab nation has taken command of a coalition task force. They stepped up and it's focused on maritime security, making sure that the resources can flow out and the goods can flow in so seeking cooperative relationships is key. With regard to the ships that we operate in the Mediterranean, we've operated in the Mediterranean for over 200 years now. And we will continue to operate. Some of those operations will be in the Eastern Mediterranean and similarly we seek cooperative relationships with the navies of the region, to include Israel. That's one of the reasons why I'm here is to see how we can work together because we do have common interests as far as maintaining the flow of maritime traffic.

Reporter: In February though you gave testimony to the Senate and said that the almost clash, confrontational activities and you said quote: Conflict is likely to continue into the future and the Navy's global commitments are likely to increase, what did that mean?

CNO: What that means is that –

Reporter: The conflict is likely to continue.

CNO: Well, I think that the encounters that we have had, not necessarily with the Iranian navy, we've found quite frankly over the past few years the Iranian navy has performed rather professionally and courteously in our encounters. But in recent months we have had a couple of encounters with Revolutionary Guard naval units which were irresponsible, provocative and not helpful to the stability and security in the Gulf. So I do believe that unless the Revolutionary Guard begins to behave in a more responsible manner that encounters like that perhaps will continue to occur. That said, the encounter that took place in the Straits of Hormuz was one in which my commanding officers and my Sailors exercised, in my opinion, great judgment, great competence and great professionalism. They were able to keep that situation from deteriorating and I give them the credit for being able to sense the situation, judge the situation and make the right decisions.

Reporter: Do you also see the possibility that if there were going to be another irresponsible, provocative incident on the side of the IRG, that then it could lead to something even bigger?

CNO: I don't speculate about what sorts of future incidents we may have and what they could lead to. I believe that it's important that those who are interested in responsible behavior at sea make it clear that the way that the Guard has operated in the past is not the way that professional maritime forces act and it's not helpful to the interests of the countries of the region, in particular the countries of the Gulf. Our forces are there and our forces are ready and as I said, they know what they're doing and they will not provoke, but similarly we will not be provoked.

Reporter: What are the operative areas of cooperation between the US Navy and the Israeli Navy or Israeli forces by and large that you see, that you envision for the future?

CNO: We have always had a very close relationship with the Israeli navy and I'm pleased that in the last few months since I have become the Chief of Naval Operations that we have been able to have 10 ships visit Israel, or 10 visits to Israel. We've had a couple of ships that have come back a couple of times: Indicative to how much our Sailors like to visit Israel. But those 10 visits in the last eight months are more than the total of the previous few years. I think there's great value in our young people being able to come together and share experiences. But, we operate together, we exercise together. In fact the SAAR 5 that I was on out at sea yesterday was being built in the shipyard at the same time I took command of –

Reporter: Which one was it?

CNO: Which SAAR 5? It was the LAHAV. I was putting into commission the second guided missile destroyer, [USS] BARRY [DDG 52], and I was there at the same time that the Israeli team was building the SAAR 5. And there is also I would say some common interest in the Littoral Combat ship. I understand full well that there are still decisions that have to be made within the [Israeli] navy, within the Israeli government. We are proceeding, as we say in the Navy, "Full Speed Ahead" with LCS. We are building two right now. The first one will go to sea next month and I see great promise and great capability.

Reporter: Those are the frigates, right?

CNO: No, they're not frigates, they're Littoral Combat Ships. They're a completely new design. They have completely new features, many new concepts. It is a different way that we are building a ship because we will be able to change the capabilities of that ship in very quick time. We've never done that before – we've always built a ship that had everything on it. Littoral combat ship will allow us to turn it into a submarine hunting ship, a mine hunting ship or a surface action ship. We believe that that modular approach for us suits our Navy and the application that we have for the ship.

Reporter: But you did cancel Lockheed's second ship with the rising costs? Now you're heading towards a new kind?

CNO: We have three ships that we were authorized in FY08, one in 08 two in 09 and we're in the contractual process for those three ships right now.

Reporter: I'm assuming LCS did come up in your talks here in Israel?

CNO: We talked about LCS.

Reporter: Did you feel an Israeli commitment to purchasing?

CNO: I prefer that when we talk about capabilities that countries are interested in I like to leave that to the country that might be interested in it. I don't believe it's proper for me to talk about the desires, interests, or characterization. Much the same if I'm dealing in my ship programs I don't believe other people should talk about that.

Reporter: Let me ask you again, do you see a possibility of positioning the potential area of AEGIS destroyers off the coast of Israel in order to enhance Israel's missile defense and the aircraft defense?

CNO: We position our ships, as I said, globally in areas where we believe that they continue safety and security. When you talk about the United States combatant fleet, you are almost exclusively talking about AEGIS ships because that is what our fleet, with rare exceptions, what our combatant ships consist of today. So, we'll continue to operate in the Mediterranean in the Eastern Mediterranean.

Reporter: As part of the 6th Fleet?

CNO: As part of the 6th Fleet, yes.

Reporter: Is the AEGIS already compatible with the Israeli missile defense system? There is a simulation that the Israeli navy does with the American military in simulated missile defense and they have integrated the AEGIS into that simulation. Are they already compatible? If you were given a directive to put an AEGIS ship here would it be able to work with the Israeli defense systems?

CNO: I won't go into any of the technical details. Ballistic missile defense is an emerging area. We in the Navy have had great success in our ability to fly the interceptors. We recently, two weeks ago, we had another very good success with our tests. It was also an AEGIS ship that shot down the satellite even though the system is not designed to do that. We were asked if we could and within about a six week period we were able to modify the system, modify the missiles. There's still a lot of work to be done in how you network missile defense systems together. It's a relatively new area but I'm very please and very proud of the work that the men and women of my Navy have done to bring ballistic missile defense into an operational capability.

Reporter: How do you look at the threat of terror in the sea? Terror of ships that come and blow up your ships?

CNO: That's one of the reasons why in our strategy we've put in this specific capability of maritime security. One could say that you could put the ability to guard against terrorism under sea control but in the world that we live in today, maritime security to me is a much more specific way of looking at the problem. Where we're doing most of our work is called maritime domain awareness, knowing what's moving on, under and above the water. You know, when we fly from Tel Aviv to New York and get on an airplane, everyone knows when it's leaving, when it's arriving, who's on it, who the pilot is, what the cargo is, everything is known. In the world of the maritime, that's not the case and that's where so many navies and so many organizations are beginning to move. It's from that maritime domain awareness that we can then develop better maritime security schemes. But I would say that what I have seen in my brief visit here is that I'm extremely impressed with the way that the Israeli navy and the Israeli government has put in place some very, very good systems; some very, very good protocols that address this very problem that I think is not just confined to the area around Israel. In my previous job, I commanded the Pacific Fleet and the countries in Asia are intensely interested in this. Where I saw some of the best examples was in the Straits of Malacca. One could argue of equal importance, perhaps even greater importance, than the Straits of Hormuz where there were great piracy problems but yet Indonesia, Malaysia, Singapore came together – piracy has dropped to near zero. So, around the world I believe we have to collectively and cooperatively work on methods and schemes and architectures because a terrorist attack in the maritime environment would be extraordinarily disruptive. I believe the economies of the world would be affected immediately. Just the piracy that was occurring in the Straits of Malacca, the insurance rates were raised, but because of the work of the three countries I mentioned, those insurance rates came down. I can tell you the shipping companies don't pick up the insurance rates, they're passed to you and me and you in the form of increased prices on the shelves. So that's why maritime security is so important to all of us.

Reporter: Did you discuss the AEGIS with your Israeli counterparts? Did your naval ships operating in the Mediterranean region notice the large Israeli air force exercise that was held earlier this month and how do you as CNO view that exercise?

CNO: We did discuss AEGIS and ballistic missile defense because I believe that the proliferation of ballistic missiles is something that will continue to occur. I believe that ballistic missiles in the future will become weapons of intimidation and blackmail and that as we have worked on our ballistic missile defense capability, and as we have had the successes we've had – when two navy people come together, you talk about things like that. So we did talk about AEGIS and ballistic missile defense. With regard to awareness of the exercise that was run by your military and you asked about the AEGIS ships, was that how we knew what was going on? There are many ways that we receive information and I'll leave it at that.

Reporter: So, you were aware?

CNO: There are many ways that we get information.

Reporter: After your meetings with (Israeli officials) do you think that the United States and Israel have the same perspective about Iran?

CNO: I would say that the role of Iran and how it's affecting the security and stability in the Middle East, I would say that we both see Iran as not being helpful. So, yes, there is a common theme.

Reporter: In what way can Israel Navy and Israel the state contribute to enhance the capabilities or enhance the capabilities of the U.S. Navy? I know it sounds silly, even funny –

CNO: No, it's not funny at all. That is the whole basis for our strategy is to be able to work cooperatively. I mentioned how impressed I was with the way that the Israeli navy has acquired the systems, but it's more than the systems, it's really the procedures that are in place using those systems. Then ultimately it comes down to the professional young men and women who operate those systems and I saw all three levels of that. So as I looked at the way that the Israeli navy was coming at the problem, my wheels were turning and I was thinking 'Ok how can we use some of these methods.' And the term I use is that no one has corner on good ideas and the Israeli navy has long been held in very, very high regard, not just by my Navy but navies around the world for its capability, for its competence, for its professionalism, and for its effectiveness.

Reporter: Even after the war in Lebanon?

CNO: What I have seen in the Israeli navy is professionalism and competence. I would say that the United States Navy is a very professional, very competent and very effective Navy. But I have a ship in my past called the STARK that was hit by a missile in the Persian Gulf and the professionalism and the effectiveness of the Navy is what we learned from that. It's a tragic event and one could go back and look at why things happen the way they happen but professional navies take that into account and we move ahead. As we did with the STARK, we learned a great deal from that. It changed how we trained, it changed equipment, and it changed procedures. It's tragic and regrettable but we have to move on and move past it.

Reporter: The Iranians demonstrating time and again their coast to sea capabilities, mainly missiles, speed boats, submarines, different techniques. How do you evaluate their capability and do they endanger the US ships and the tanker traffic in the Gulf?

CNO: As I said, their behavior has not been, I think, responsible. To me the capability is interesting and I watch it very carefully but a threat requires two things: it requires capability and it requires intent. And so I always look at the two and the hardest part is to determine the intent, particularly with an organization like the Revolutionary Guard that

behaves irresponsibly. But the other part that I believe is important for navies to keep in mind, as I do for my Navy, is the proliferation of that equipment. Several years ago if someone would have said that Hezbollah would have had a very sophisticated anti-ship missile, most professional naval officers would have said, "Hezbollah wouldn't do that. Those missiles belong to states and states have those." But it's indicative of the world that we live in today, the proliferation of weapons no longer goes with a flag and for that reason it is important for navies to look at the capabilities that are out there. We can assume that maybe they won't proliferate, but as we saw, you can't assume that. You have to always be prepared, you have to be ready. You have to look at how can some of these capabilities, weapons, move around the world and where we operate and where we want to make sure the maritime commerce continues in an uninterrupted way. We have to be prepared and ready and vigilant for those types of encounters.

Reporter: How do you see the last exercise that Israel held?

CNO: I saw it as a large exercise and any questions or intent about that exercise I leave to the Israeli government.

Reporter: Did you participate in this exercise?

CNO: Did we participate? I did not participate in that.

Reporter: But those in the New York Times said you were in the Pentagon?

CNO: That doesn't mean that we participated, that means that somebody leaked it in the Pentagon.

Reporter: How much time do you actually need to make all your forces ready to perform any actions against nuclear facilities in Iran? Is it a matter of months of practice or are the forces already ready and there are plans?

CNO: I already indicated where we believe the focus should be and that's a diplomatic approach to the problem.

Reporter: There have been recent reports that Syria is possibly interested in purchasing submarines or some naval capability. Is that something that we need to be concerned about? Is that something that you're watching, you're carefully observing?

CNO: As I mentioned about proliferation of capable systems, I think we need to be mindful of where these systems are going, where the interest is. Are those countries that are acquiring those systems going to operate them in a responsible and professional manner? Buying a submarine and being competent in its operation, there's a big gap between those and so I think we need to watch and see where these systems go. But getting the hardware and being competent in its operation are two different things. Not only in operation but also in maintaining it because the systems that exist today are very complex. You can see it in our Navy, you can see it in the Israeli navy and in order to

operate it effectively you have to have the type of young men and women that serve in our navies – the Israel navy and the American Navy. You can have all the good hardware in the world but if you don't have good people who know how to maintain it, who know how to operate it, it's not a very good investment.

Reporter: You were asked about the exercise that the IDF performed and with all the systems: the air defense systems, are being developed and Iran is going to get some ...Do you think the military solution against Iran comes from the Navy?

CNO: I already said where I believe the path for the solution should be.

Reporter: Kidnapped soldiers in Israel, what do you think state should do to release kidnapped soldier who is being held by a terror organization. What would the Navy do?

CNO: This may sound like a dodge to the question, but given the significance of the event and to the criticality of the decisions that have to be made, in this case and in other cases that might come up around the world. I really believe that's its not appropriate for me to comment on that.

Reporter: So when's your next aircraft carrier coming here?

CNO: Exactly when the next one will be able to come this way with any specificity I can't say but I will tell you that whenever possible and the schedules allow that we will bring a carrier by here and I know that he'll make sure that he gets you out there.

Reporter: It's like the size of a small Israeli city!

CNO: Right now, there's one carrier operating in the Gulf –

Reporter: One carrier task force?

CNO: Right, in the Gulf. In addition to the ships I have at sea in the Gulf I have more than 14,000 Sailors on the ground in the Middle East that are providing a variety of functions. It's a way that we've never operated in our Navy before, but they're doing great work in Iraq and Afghanistan. Most of the Provisional Reconstruction Teams in Afghanistan are led by Navy people which and they're doing great work as are our other Sailors that are there. But we operate our carriers we always have several at sea –

Reporter: In the Indian Ocean?

CNO: At the present time no.

Reporter: How many carriers do you have?

CNO: Eleven. I have one in the Gulf.

Reporter: Which one because I was on the USS Roosevelt during the 2003 Gulf War

CNO: Yeah. And how did you like that?

Reporter: It was great but I couldn't sleep because of the landing.

CNO: (different joking remarks) I do believe that it's important that people, in particular, journalists get out and see what we're doing. I mean as you saw, the young men and women that are doing that work – they're, on the flight decks the average age is about 19 plus, the average age throughout the ship is about 24-25 and our young men and women just do fantastic work. There's an interesting fact: Since 9-11, 51 percent of the people serving in the Navy today, the U.S. Navy today, came in after 9-11. So that's how young and how motivated the young men and women of America are. So it's a very young Navy, very effective. They get younger every day! Thank you.